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July 2002

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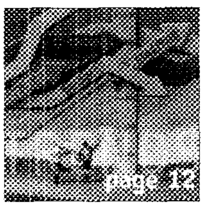

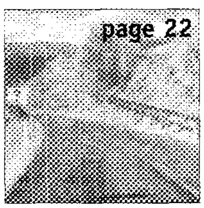

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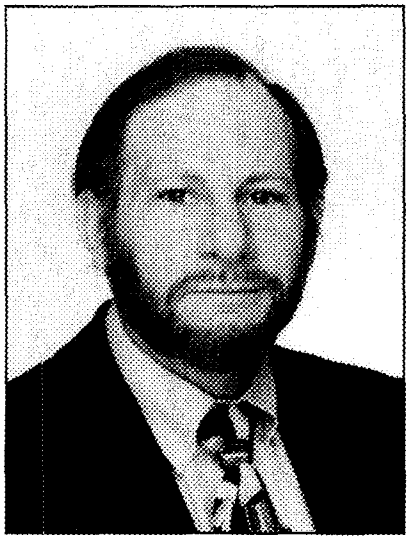


Greetings:

Two years ago, when Donna Scheeder started her term as SLA president, she began her inaugural remarks with a brief review of some association history and the changes SLA had gone through since 1909. Donna's point was to remind us all that in the Special Libraries Association "change is our tradition." That being the case, it looks as though we'll be in for a VERY "traditional" year over the next 12 months.

We may have the opportunity to change our bylaws based upon a vote by the entire membership later this summer. As I write this in early May, the proposed bylaws revision is on its way to all members as we prepare for a discussion and vote during the Annual Business Meeting on June 12, in Los Angeles. A positive vote in June and the mailed ballot will result in a number of changes for the association.

Regardless of what happens with the bylaws, we will conduct another search for an executive director in the coming year. Appointments to the search committee have not been finalized, so I am unable to list them here. However, as soon as the full committee has been formed, word will go out over a couple of channels so I suspect many of you will know who is on the committee long before you read this. Any "new hire" signifies change for an organization, and I can assure you no one is more interested than yours truly to know what will result from this search.

This next year should also see some developments with our current branding initiative. After some initial missteps, we are looking forward to a productive partnership with Creative Project Management as they work with us on our branding effort. There are numerous changes possible from the rebranding of SLA. Over the next few months, as some of those possible changes become more concrete (as alternatives, not final decisions), you should look for opportunities to make your views known to the board and your chapter and division leaders.

I anticipate there are other areas of the association where change will be initiated during the next year, but there will be opportunities to look at those later. For now, a focus on bylaws, the ED search and branding should keep us fully engaged. Yes, it does look like another "traditional" year for SLA.

With the support of all of you, I am looking forward to working with the board of directors and headquarters staff as we all face the challenges of the year ahead.

Bill Fisher

Bill Fisher, SLA President

If You Don't Know, Ask: The Art and Craft of Survey

by Gloria Dinerman

Gloria Dinerman is president and founder of The Library Co-op, Inc., a national library service and consulting corporation specializing in projects and automation assignments where customization is essential to success.

Building Your Survey

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS BEFORE THE EXTENSIVE USE OF AUTOMATION, when a survey was *mailed* out, an expected rate of return was about five percent of the targeted group. More extensive participation was a pleasant surprise. Even with surveys that include self-addressed stamped envelopes and phone calls as follow-up reminders, a return rate of 25 percent was an accomplishment.

Today, with desktop computers now standard in every office, online surveys produce a far higher percent of responses. This leads to a more accurate analysis of the data received.

Although survey construction is customized to the environment of the institution or corporation needing the information, there are a few general commonalities that apply to all surveys, regardless of the entity requesting the data.

Precision of the wording is vital to getting the correct information. "Have you ever used the library?" is much too vague. "Do you use the library regularly?" is also too vague. Try this:
Do you generally use the library:
once a month ❑ once a week ❑ every day ❑
less than once a month ❑

- to find out what type of material is being used the most or least;
- to find out what your users need/want;
- to find out if your service has been satisfactory;
- to find out where you can expand your service;
- to justify the need to retain an information center;
- to justify your budget;
- to justify the need for additional personnel;
- to justify the need to weed out old material that is no longer relevant to the company or institution;
- to justify the need for expansion;
- to question whether or not your information center should become virtual; and
- to question whether or not your budget should be reallocated.

The survey can be beneficial to librarians in both academic and corporate settings.

"In order to get precise information, the purpose of the survey should be stated to the respondents at the top of the survey form."

"Do you usually find the information that you need?" is not as precise as:
Do you generally find the information that you need:
in a print source ❑ in a non-print source ❑ online ❑

The most accurate information comes from:
Internet sources ❑ aggregated databases ❑
professional journals ❑

State the Purpose

In order to get precise information, the purpose of the survey should be stated to the respondents at the top of the survey form.

The following examples reflect some of the reasons a library may want to conduct a survey:

The Corporate Survey

With more and more end-users doing their own research; with online taxonomies getting more expansive and user-friendly; with less corporate space being reserved for hard copy; with corporate accountants constantly looking for ways to save money—it becomes clear that corporate libraries have to justify their existence with hard proof that they are essential to the corporate structure. One of the more successful ways of proving the need for an information center is by having the library users respond to a survey that not only stresses their reliance on the library services, but also the importance of having professionals on staff. A survey of this type should be done before any administration formulates plans to eliminate the information center. In most cases of downsizing, the librarian is the last to know that the job is being downsized and because of this gap in communication, it is prudent to have information on hand that confirms the importance of the library.

Corporate personnel are extremely busy and do not have the patience to respond to any questionnaire that takes more than five minutes to complete. If the survey is too lengthy, the respondent may give up in the middle and invalidate the whole questionnaire.
Here are some sample questions:

Are your reference inquiries responded to in a timely manner?
Always ❑ Generally ❑ Sometimes ❑ Never ❑

Do you request an analysis of the retrieved information by the librarian?
Yes ❑ No ❑

Do you request an abstract of the retrieved information?
Yes ❑ No ❑

If an abstract is requested, is the written material presented concisely and correctly?
Always ❑ Generally ❑ Sometimes ❑ Never ❑

Does giving your research problems to the librarians save you time?
Yes ❑ No ❑

Do you feel the information center is cost effective for the corporation?
Yes ❑ No ❑

If your company did not have a research center, you would get your information from:
Using Internet yourself ❑
Using aggregated databases yourself ❑
Using reference material in the public library ❑
Other professional colleagues ❑
Would not get research material ❑

Is the librarian alert to new search techniques and new aggregated databases?
Yes ❑ No ❑

This type of questionnaire gives you a foundation to prove the value of your work. Your supervisor should be presented with an analysis of the results along with the departments that responded and the number of people within the department who responded. These statistics are easily analyzed using an Excel spreadsheet, but any spreadsheet program should be able to produce the quantitative results.

Academic Surveys

An academic institution can have many libraries and many departments, special collections and archives. The most needed information is coordinated with the professors who want the students to have reference material relating to their classes. If the availability of these references is not adequate to satisfy the research requirements of the courses, then everyone involved becomes dissatisfied.

To find out if the library is adequately serving the needs of the university, some institutions regularly put a questionnaire at the checkout or reference desk, asking:

Did you find your material?
Did the librarian assist you?
Did you use print sources or electronic sources?
Are the library hours adequate for your schedule?
Are you always, or almost always able to get a computer when you need it?
Have you ever gotten material through interlibrary loan? Did it come in a timely manner?
Do you use our special collection material? What subject?
If your library uses self-checkout after hours, does it cut down on the loss of material?

A SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY PROCESS:

- Select your inquiry or theme
- Construct your questions
- Select your analyzing database
- Pretest the survey
- Conduct the survey
- Enter the completed data
- Tally the responses
- Interpret the results
- Write your conclusions

Demographic information is more important in an academic survey than in a corporate one. The main components of demographics are age, ethnicity, education and economic level. Age and economic level are always given in ranges, i.e.:

under 18 ❑ 19-40 ❑ 41-60 ❑ Over 60 ❑

Under \$30K per year ❑ \$30K-\$50K per year ❑
\$51K-\$75K per year ❑ Over \$75K per year ❑

The outstanding difference between the results of a corporate library survey and an academic library survey is that in a corporate survey, the results may have a direct effect on your job retention. The bottom line of a

corporation is pulsating with income figures and the library is a cost factor. In a university, the measurement of service is taken by depth of resources and response time. Academic librarians get a lot of attention from vendors because of their buying power.

From *Library Journal* (9/1/01), "Moving from Books to Bytes," by Andrew Richard Albanese:

> *"LJ's 2001 survey—which gathered data from a balanced sample of libraries at research institutions, universities, four-year colleges and junior colleges nationwide—once again reflects the considerable spending power of academic libraries. In 2001, the median materials budget for a university library was roughly $565,000 compared with $174,000 spent by four-year colleges and $68,000 for junior colleges. Universities added 6,831 new monographs on average; four-year colleges added 3,095 new titles and two-year schools added 1,643. In contrast, the more than 120 institutions comprising the Association of Research libraries (ARL) operated with budgets closer to $6 million than $600,000."*

None of the above would be known without the use of a survey. And as seen in these statistics, the purpose of the survey was to show the differences in the library expenditures in various types of institutions. You do not find that type of comparison in corporate libraries.

In the academic library, the preparation of the survey is geared to whether the institution is interested in statistics in relation to internal procedures or external comparisons. Rarely is an academic survey constructed without the assistance of a committee. Academicians like to think as a group and each decision is arrived at by consensus. Sometimes the committee gets bogged down in minutia and it subverts the progress of the finished product.

Relevance of Statistics

- What is the number of regular patrons (employees who use the library once a week or more)? If one person from a 12-member department responds, it is less meaningful than if five members from a nine-member department respond.
- You want to know the percentage of favorable or very favorable comments, by department and by the total number of respondents.
- You want to know if there are any weaknesses in your service.
- Is your collection relevant to the product or services of your company or has part of the collection become obsolete?
- Are you responsive to the needs of the researchers and are they providing you with changes in focus or product line that will allow you to regularly improve your services?
- Do you offer training and orientation to new employees?

Since the Internet is expanding in its number of available sources and since it has become more user-friendly, have your reference requests been:

Increasing ❑ Decreasing ❑ No difference ❑

If yes, by how much?
10% ❑ 20% ❑ More than 20 % ❑

If you plan to use the survey in a formal presentation, it is suggested that you format it using a split screen. The left side of the screen will show the questions and the right side will show the totals of the answers. The final set of screens can be converted into graphical results.

The single most serious challenge for the corporate librarian is convincing the budget managers not only to acknowledge the results of the survey, but also to act upon the conclusions drawn from the responses.

Without the benefit of administrative support it is not likely that any credence will be given to the results. This administrative support has to be developed early in your career. Every compliment, every credit, every award, every letter of commendation should be brought to the attention of the supervising staff person that has anything to do with the future of the library. A survey can prove your worth, but only you can open the channels for action.

Wrap-Up

While surveys can be very helpful, it is important you remember some key points before diving in.

It is recommended that you conduct a pre-testing or sampling of your survey using a total of 10-15 percent of the respondent pool. This is to ascertain that both the delivery methods and the database are working correctly. The unexpected problems that surface can be corrected before the survey is actually conducted.

Since the survey should be kept short (10 questions maximum), the person creating the survey should write in simple sentences and ask for only one item of information per question. Evaluation is even more important than the writing itself, and responses must be quantifiable.

If you follow these rules, your survey can be very valuable because surveys give objective responses to subjective questions. There is no right or wrong response—just an assessment of a condition that already exists. However, these opinions have a basis of fact and stand to serve as a foundation for improved staffing, increased collection and evaluation of existing facilities. It is very difficult to judge ourselves in an objective light without some statistical support.

Benchmarking—Measuring and Comparing for Continuous Improvement

by Sue Henczel

Sue Henczel is the manager of training, cataloging and consortia at CAVAL Collaborative Solutions, Australia.

Benchmarking for Success

WHEN ORGANIZATIONS WANT TO IMPROVE THEIR PERFORMANCE, THEY BENCHMARK.

They compare and measure their policies, practices, philosophies and performance against high-performing organizations anywhere in the world. The process of benchmarking is used to identify useful business practices, innovative ideas, effective operating procedures and winning strategies that can be adopted by an organization to accelerate its own progress by ensuring quality, productivity and cost improvements. In other words, benchmarking involves investigating how things are done elsewhere and where they are done differently or better, to see whether a group could adapt the processes of another organization to improve their own processes.

Libraries have traditionally used external comparative benchmarking studies to measure themselves against others in order to justify their existence or prove their value and support their case for maintaining existing levels of staffing or funding. These studies were invariably based on statistics gathered and shared for the purposes of measuring how they rank with other libraries (Gohlke, 1998). Libraries have also employed internal benchmarking methodologies to measure the "value" they contribute to their organization and compare this against what is contributed by other departments, divisions or information providers.

One of the primary aims of a special librarian is to ensure the service they offer contributes significantly to the success of the organization and is as good as it can be. To do this, a librarian must utilize internal and external benchmarking processes to measure performance and identify possible areas of improvement.

Defining Benchmarking

There are many similar definitions of benchmarking, most of which fit neatly in two groups—those that include implementation of the findings and those that do not. Jane Foot's definition is widely cited in library literature, yet it's a definition that does not incorporate the implementation of the identified best practices. On reflection, I realized many of the benchmarking case studies I had read were focused on the identification of the benchmarks and the measurement and comparison process, while very few followed through to the process of adapting best practice to improve a process.

Foot (1998) defines *benchmarking* as the process of comparing yourself with others—measuring your service's processes and performance and systematically comparing them to the performance of others in order to seek best practice. It enables the identification of areas where improvement is possible, how it might be achieved and what benefit it might deliver. Other definitions include the implementation of best practice to improve a process beyond the benchmark performance such as that used by Partnership Sourcing (1997).

Christopher Bogan and Michael English (1994) and Gerald Balm (1992) clarify some of the associated terms:

- A *benchmark* is a fixed point, target or standard against which you can be measured.
- A *benchmarking partner* is any group or organization that is used for comparison.
- The highest performer in a benchmarking partnership is considered the *best practices* organization (i.e., the one that has the most efficient and effective practices in place). The goal of benchmarking is to improve performance by adopting the best practices of benchmarking partners.
- *Performance indicators* are used for measuring performance and monitoring progress against set targets.

Types of Benchmarking

Benchmarking can be done within your organization or externally, with other organizations. *Internal benchmarking* is a comparison of similar operations within your organization, while external forms of benchmarking include *competitive benchmarking* (a comparison with your competitors) and *functional benchmarking* (a comparison of methods with organizations who have similar processes in a different industry) (Hinton, Francis and Holloway, 2000).

Data benchmarking measures and compares inputs and outputs of a process against a benchmark to assess performance. *Process benchmarking* analyzes a sequence of activities and compares them with similar functions in best practice organizations.

Historical Development

Although benchmarking has been used as a management tool for many years, it experienced resurgence in the early 1980s due to the Total Quality Management (TQM) movement, in which benchmarking was inherent as a means of ensuring quality improvements. Its focus was on accountability, performance measures, best practice and the rational use of resources—all issues of interest to librarians and the organizations that fund and support the services.

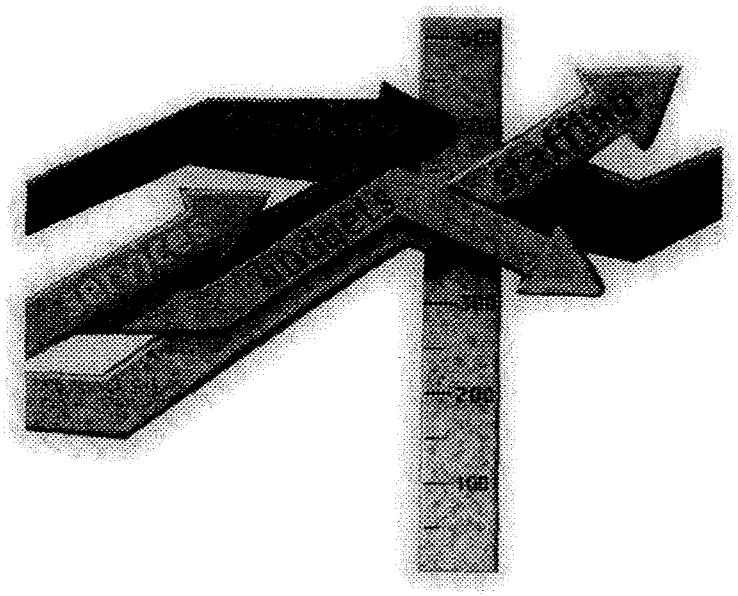
Since the mid-1980s librarians have seen benchmarking as having two distinct purposes: to demonstrate how their services and overall performance rank against those of other similar libraries (external benchmarking); and to measure the value of their contribution within their organization, as compared with that of other internal divisions and information services (internal benchmarking). In Australia, special libraries (particularly those in the government sector) were the earliest exponents of external benchmarking methodologies, using their informal networks to identify suitable benchmarking partners.

They shared statistics and details of processes and services with each other to demonstrate to their organizations that their performance is as good or better than similar libraries, or conversely that they require a higher level of support from their organization to perform as well as others. This type of comparison was often used to highlight inadequate resources (usually staffing), technology and/or funding.

The early 1990s saw libraries refocusing on their responsibilities to their organizations and becoming more concerned with internal benchmarking processes that enabled them to measure their performance in comparison with other parts of the organization. This was (and still is) done to justify the existence of the library when faced with threats such as downsizing or outsourcing, and to demonstrate the value of the contribution made by the library to the organization's success. Internal benchmarking can demonstrate how the library's performance ranks against that of other departments or divisions, and against competing internal information services.

"Those who go it alone are doomed to perennially reinvent the wheel for they do not learn and benefit from others."

(Bogan and English, 1994)



Toward the mid-1990s librarians underwent major changes in their service focus as they struggled to deal with the incorporation of electronic content and the associated social, legal and technological issues related to access, delivery, user expectations and licensing. This led to a renewed emphasis on benchmarking and performance measures as librarians were being asked to provide additional services with the same or minimally increased resources.

In 1996 the Special Library Association's special report *Competencies for Special Librarians in the 21st Century* was released, which incorporated knowledge and application of benchmarking in a number of the competencies. The fact that benchmarking is inherent in the SLA competencies resulted in a renewed interest in benchmarking and its uses and benefits. Major issues became "how to benchmark?," "what to benchmark?" and "who to benchmark with?"

It wasn't until 1998, with the development and release of *ISO 11620 Library Performance Indicators*, that libraries had a list of performance measures that they could apply to their benchmarking processes to maintain the consistency previously missing from the majority of benchmarking projects. The performance indicators are grouped into user satisfaction, public services and tech-

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nical services. A revised *ISO 2789 Library Statistics* was released in 1999, with the revision of the 1991 standard being closely coordinated with the development of *ISO 11620*. *ISO 2789* covers how to count libraries, librarians and items for inclusion in statistics related to library provision and services.

Benefits of Benchmarking

Those who have participated in benchmarking projects have identified a significant number of benefits for both the library and the library staff. These include:

- More efficient and effective processes
- Improved performance and customer service
- Increased competitiveness
- Increased utilization of resources
- Improved levels of management support
- Better and faster decision-making
- More efficient and effective marketing
- Accelerated change and facilitated change management
- Improved professional relationships
- Support for strategic goals of the library, which in turn support the goals of the organization
- Proof of library's value to the organization

Pitfalls and Problems

- Collaboration Versus Competition - Benchmarking requires collaboration, either with other groups within the organization in the case of internal benchmarking or within other organizations in the case of external benchmarking. This is often difficult when potential external benchmarking partners are also competitors, as "commercial sensitivity" often prevents them from revealing details of their processes.

- Non-Standard Data Collection Methods - Methods for collecting data are not consistent or standardized, therefore the comparisons made may not be as valid as they may appear to be. Also the boundaries around the processes being benchmarked must be clearly defined.

- Changing Environment - Continuous measurement and comparison does not easily reflect changes such as new competition, new technology and inflation rates, etc., unless these are incorporated into the data collection processes when they become apparent.

- Reliance - There is a danger of becoming reliant on benchmarking rather than seeking inventive or innovative process improvements. When over-used, it can perpetuate a culture of "sameness" and stifle creative thought that is needed for the development of new ways of doing things.

- Resources - Benchmarking requires a significant commitment of resources such as time, people, money, etc., without any guarantee that there will be a cost benefit. The costs may outweigh the tangible benefits, as many of the benefits achieved through benchmarking are intangible.

- Identifying Partners - Identifying potential benchmarking partners is difficult. Sufficient information must be known about the processes used by each partner to be sure that there will be benefits in measuring them and comparing them.

- The People Factor - Often the adaptation of a process is not successful, as its success was dependent on the skills and expertise of those using it in the initiating environment. It is important to recognize and understand where processes are successful due to the synergies of the group or team using them as against where quality is inherent in the process itself.

- Inappropriate Adaptation - Benchmarking the processes that you have ascertained as being strategically important to your organization is important. Beware, however, of benchmarking processes that are not strategically important just because you think that someone else may be doing them better than you.

- Innovative and Efficient Processes - Benchmarking is less useful to those who have established innovative and efficient processes that have been developed for their unique environment. It can, however, be very useful for those who are struggling with inefficient and uneconomical processes and who are looking for better ways of doing things.

- Best Practice - Best practice is not always appropriate. Best practice can be unique to an environment or situation and will not adapt successfully to a different environment. Take into account the people using the process and the relationship between that process and others before making a decision to change.

"The process of benchmarking is used to identify useful business practices, innovative ideas, effective operating procedures and winning strategies..."

Developing A Benchmarking Process

There are many books, articles and papers about the development of a benchmarking process, and the most consistent message appears to be that the process must be rigorous and well planned. Suggested stages include:

- Plan what you are going to benchmark, how, with whom and for what purpose. As with any other project, planning is the most critical stage because inadequate planning and preparation can cause a project to fail. Plan your resource allocation (who will do what, how and who will pay for it) and decide which processes will be benchmarked and why.
- Define your process and identify all of the inputs to the process, the outputs and the customers. Define the boundaries of your process.
- Flowchart your process - include inputs, activities, flow indicators, decisions and outputs.
- Identify problems in the process and their possible causes. Use the expertise of the staff who actually perform the activities, as they have the most in-depth understanding of related issues.
- Develop your metrics (how you will measure) and identify significant qualitative data that is important to the process.
- Collect data - measure your process.
- Compare collected data with benchmark partner.
- Identify areas for improvement.
- Formulate recommendations and an implementation plan.
- Implement improvements.

"There is a danger of becoming reliant on benchmarking rather than seeking inventive or innovative process improvements."

Choosing Processes to Benchmark

Choosing what to benchmark can be as important, if not more so than choosing a benchmarking process or partner, because it will impact how useful the results are to the organization. A useful list have been developed by Catherine Cassell, Sara Nadin and Melanie Older Gray (2001) who suggest that the processes chosen for benchmarking must be:

- related to critical success factors for success;
- processes that are currently causing trouble;
- processes that are important to your customers and which are not performing up to expectations;
- in areas where the competitive pressures are impacting the most (e.g., price, flexibility, products);
- processes that have the greatest potential for differentiating you from the competition; and
- processes that are not in transition.

Successful Benchmarking

Some tips for successful benchmarking include:

- Aligning benchmarking projects with strategic objectives (critical business issues that have high pay-offs and are aligned with organizational values and strategy)
- Following a rigorous process (planning, analysis, implementation and review)
- Benchmarking the processes and not just the outputs
- Choosing an optimal benchmarking partner
- Committing to implementing the changes required
- Understanding your organization and its culture so that you are adopting the most appropriate changes in the most appropriate way
- Understanding the limitations of benchmarking

Current Trends and Projects

Current benchmarking literature focuses on the electronic environment and how libraries and information services are delivering e-content; how they are managing user access, licensing and authentication; and how they are viewing performance standards and quality management issues in the electronic environment. All have government support funding and are based in the academic and public library sectors.

One major benchmarking effort is the EQUINOX PROJECT (http://equinox.dcu.ie). EQUINOX is a project funded under the Telematics for Libraries Programme of the European Commission. This project addresses the need of all libraries to develop and use methods for measuring performance in the networked, electronic environment, alongside the traditional performance measurement, and to operate these methods within a framework of quality management.

EQUINOX has resulted in a number of 'spin-off' projects designed to measure and monitor service quality. For example, in January 2000 the London Business School Library commenced a program of internal benchmarking as a means of monitoring service quality. Performance indicators used were chosen from those emanating from the EQUINOX PROJECT.

Spin-off projects include:

ARL (Academic and Research Libraries) E-Metrics Project

Twenty-three ARL member libraries, plus the Library of Congress, are collaborating in this study to determine how to develop statistics and performance measures that address the delivery of networked information resources and services. The primary objective of this project is to find ways to gather consistent and comparable data to evaluate electronic information services (http://www.arl.org/stats/newmeas/).

The McClure/Bertot Project

The McClure/Bertot Project (sponsored by the U.S. Depart-

ment of Education) involves the development of U.S.-wide performance measures and national core statistics for electronic networked-based services offered by public libraries.

The JUSTEIS Project

The U.K.-based JUSTEIS Project aims to provide the information and tools to identify the current use of electronic information services and to forecast areas of growth in British higher education. This would enable JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) to plan for new services, network enhancements and other areas of investment.

Although these projects are focused on academic and public library sectors, there are elements of their outcomes, for example the processes (planning, data collection, analysis or the metrics) that can be used successfully within special libraries.

Benchmarking in Special Libraries

The greatest benefit of benchmarking for the special library is to discover what others are doing that you could use to add value to your services and strategic processes. Librarians in corporate, government, health and other special libraries (including academic faculty libraries) can use internal and external benchmarking to improve their processes and prove their "value" to their organization.

Before a special library embarks on a benchmarking project, it is critical that its strategic processes are identified—those processes that actually contribute to the achievement of its goals and objectives. The boundaries of those processes must be clearly defined so that accurate comparisons can be made with benchmarking partners.

To demonstrate how important the boundaries are, take for example, a library that defines its acquisitions process as inclusive of resources acquired for the organization but not retained within the library. A potential partner may define its acquisition process as exclusive of those resources. Difficulties arise when comparing these processes, as one has a much broader scope than the other and is considerably more complex.

Once the processes and their boundaries have been defined and you are investigating what others are doing and how they are doing it, it is important to understand that not all "best practice" is appropriate for your situation. Best practice in one environment is not always best practice in another, as the situation is different, the people are different and most importantly the relationship with other processes may be different. Take care that you don't adapt processes that are not entirely suitable for you situation.

Is anything that you are currently doing innovative and unique? If so, you will be unlikely to find benchmarking partners for these processes. It will, however, demonstrate these processes as being unique.

The key to benchmarking is to see what is being done differently and to have the ability to assess the value of those differences to your library.

The pitfalls and problems associated with benchmarking are many and varied, and most will impact the success of a benchmarking project if not fully understood. If used correctly and for the right reasons, benchmarking can result in improved productivity impacting competitiveness, internal and external relationships, support networks and resources.

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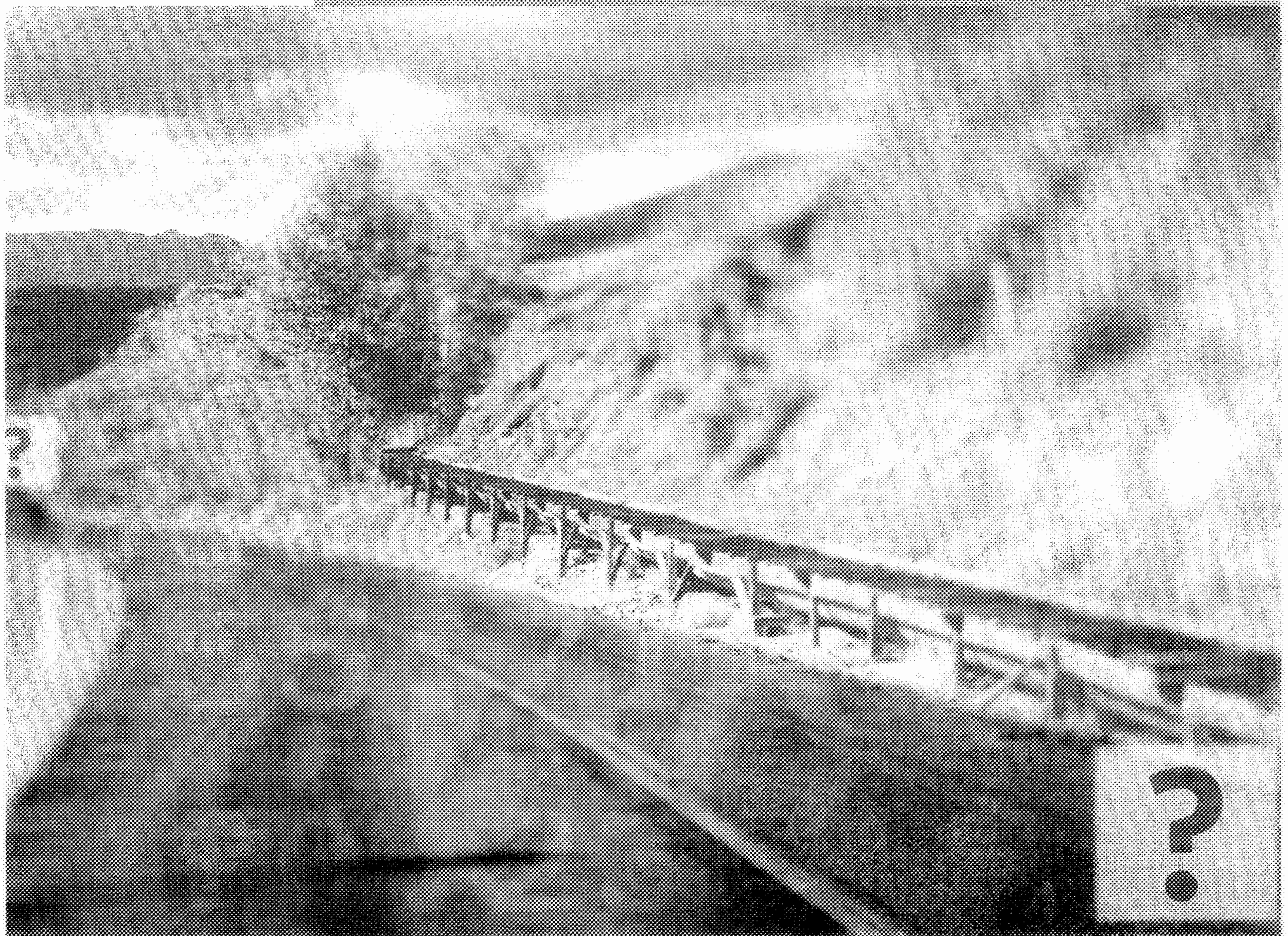

by Nikki Poling

Nikki Poling is the assistant editor of Information Outlook.

Where Do You Stand?

IT CAN HARDLY BE SAID THAT BENCHMARKING IS A 'DYING TOPIC' THESE DAYS.

Not only does the benchmarking process help an organization understand where they stand with their competitors, it can also build valuable relationships amongst information professionals. Do you know where your organization stands? Are you making use of best practices? Nikki Poling posed questions to three special librarians to see where organizations stand in defining and implementing the benchmarking process today.

Roger Strouse of Outsell, Inc.

Nikki Poling (NP): *How would you define benchmarking?*

Roger Strouse (RS): I think it is using a standard set of attributes to compare multiple organizations to each other. In the case of libraries, those attributes are types of services being offered, how the function is changing, how much the library might be spending per user, or how much staff they have per customer. I think it's a framework for comparing different operations.

NP: *Do you think benchmarking is a dying topic?*

RS: Outsell is a little bit different, in that we provide the service of benchmarking for our clients. Outsell constantly receives requests for benchmarking data, which is why I thought it was so interesting that you asked 'Is benchmarking a dying topic?' Quite to the contrary, we find that our clients ask for a lot of benchmark data—both operational benchmarks (stuff like budgets, staff ratios, budgets per user); and the more qualitative benchmarks (trends in the services offered, trends in the information center function itself). I see people using a lot of benchmarking, so I would not say it was dying. Particularly, the larger organizations are using it rather heavily.

NP: *How would you say the members of SLA do or could use benchmarking?*

RS: I see information centers benchmarking themselves in order to get ideas for operational best practices, also to rationalize their information spending and their staffing—just all their activities, in order to understand how the function is trending, to find out what new services and products are being offered. Information managers want to understand how they stack-up to other organizations. They want to know, 'Is my information center ahead of the curve or behind it?'

I think information professionals also use benchmarking to find new ideas and unique services. Participating in a benchmark survey allows you to find out what others are doing that might be innovative. But probably the real 'meat and potatoes' of benchmarking is the staffing and budgeting information that helps managers rationalize their spending to executives.

Another major use of benchmarking can be applied when an organization has multiple libraries at different sites and they want to compare the consistency and quality between the different libraries. Or it can be helpful for planning purposes or for integrating multiple sites (like in a merger).

Also, when organizations are considering opening a brand new information center, they might use benchmark data to get a level set about what it will cost, how it will work or what type of services it should offer.

NP: *Is there anything that has changed over the years as far as collecting benchmarking data?*

RS: I think the principles are the same, but what has changed is the information gathered. The function of librarianship has changed so much that maybe a benchmarking study now may include things like 'how much do you participate in Web development for your organization?' The functions that are benchmarked now have changed. But benchmarking is still about objectively comparing yourself to other organizations.

NP: *If an information professional really had no idea of where to start with a benchmarking study, where could they begin?*

RS: You could rely on secondary information—for instance, reading articles on other libraries, using SLA resources or doing some informal networking by calling other libraries/companies/organizations that are comparable. Then there are formal methods, such an engaging a research firm to put together a study with multiple participants, using surveys, phone interviews and the standard questionnaire. There is definitely a spectrum, from two librarians chatting, all the way through a full-blown study done by an outside research firm.

David Shumaker of the MITRE Corporation

Nikki Poling (NP): *How would you define benchmarking?*

David Shumaker (DS): I would define it as comparing your organization with other organizations and learning from the comparison. That can involve process benchmarking, which you can do with an entirely different type of organization from your own, to adopt a process in which their techniques can be applied to a process of your own. Another kind of benchmarking can be done with like organizations to compare service levels, budget, staffing, etc. I would divide it into those two areas.

NP: *How often do you evaluate?*

DS: We've actually done a couple of exercises within the past year. I think it is good to do it regularly, especially if you want to compare services and like organizations. Maybe there is a consortium of institutions that have something in common and they can share their information regularly.

NP: *Would you say benchmarking is dying?*

DS: No, I don't agree with that. Benchmarking is one (but not the only) source of good ideas and information for the kind of continuous improvement that I think we all have to be engaged in.

NP: *What would you say are the benefits/downfalls of benchmarking?*

DS: We've talked about the goal-directed process of benchmarking, and how it can be used to track like organizations in order to get an idea of where your own group stands overall. Besides the specific actions you might be able to take as a result of benchmarking, you are also building relationships. Those relationships can be called on for all kinds of unexpected things. Being connected to others with common professional interest is how we enrich what we do. Benchmarking is a way of getting connected and staying connected—it has somewhat intangible and unpredictable benefits.

On the downside, from time to time I have heard the criticism that benchmarking may limit your own creativity, since you are adopting something somebody else already thought of. It's not the kind of groundbreaking innovation that you would have if you came up with something truly original. And while that is true, I don't think that is a reason not to benchmark. I think it's great to be innovative and break new ground, but you're not going to be able to do that all the time. And if that is all you are trying to do, you may end up reinventing the wheel.

Since every organization is different too, you can't always assume that everything is going to work the same in yours. You have to adapt good practices to your own circumstances.

NP: *Do you think there is competition involved in benchmarking?*

DS: I have been in situations where organizations don't want to share what they have with others, because they have the competitive advantage. You have to be sensitive to that and know where to draw the lines. The issue of competition is obviously different for nonprofits than it is for firms in the for-profit sector.

Annette Gohlke of Library Benchmarking International

Nikki Poling (NP): *How would you define benchmarking?*

Annette Gohlke (AG): To me, benchmarking is a process of looking at how you are getting work done and then deciding if you have a problem area. The problem area identified may be based on customer or executive feedback, or new edicts that come from upper management or for whomever you are working. The next step is to go out and find other libraries or entities that perform the same process, and compare their process and results to yours, especially if they are doing it differently and getting better results. You will probably need to compare with several others to decide who has the "best practice." You can decide whether to adopt what they are doing exactly, or to adapt it in your library.

NP: *Would you say benchmarking is dying?*

AG: I don't think benchmarking is dying, nor should it, especially in the corporate world. It's probably easier to launch benchmarking studies in the private sector, where there may be more purpose and reward. My feeling is that some public libraries—as part of municipal government—are looking at benchmarking to measure performance, prove value and cut down on costs. I believe Dr. James Matarazzo has reported in at least one of his studies that most of us—after we graduate from library school—continue to do things the way we learned them (until it's 35 years later and we are still doing things the same way). Librarians, for whatever reason, in the public, academic and government sectors, don't have the pressure to move forward and streamline (or measure) how they perform or "do business."

Benchmarking is definitely still alive and well in Australia, England and in the corporate sector in many other countries. In the United States, I think there are 'pockets of progress' where librarians are benchmarking. This is especially true in medical libraries. The Medical Library Association has taken the lead in developing a database of critical information that can be used by medical librarians for benchmarking purposes. Quality processes, including benchmarking, is driven by the 1994 accreditation standards issued by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, which significantly affects the management of information, and in turn, medical libraries. I found in Southeast Asia, where I recently taught a series of benchmarking workshops last September, that there was a strong concern about the viability of benchmarking. It was repeatedly expressed that if there is not an immediate reward (increased funding, special recognition) or threat within the library work environment (the loss of funding or staffing), then it would be difficult to encourage or force a benchmarking effort. I strongly believe there is room in all types of libraries—academic, public, government and special—for planned performance improvement efforts using the benchmarking process and I base that opinion on 40 years of working in, directing and evaluating library services. I think that quality expectations will grow in direct proportion to the value of information services provided by librarians.

> "It is a continuous process, it's like total quality management—you never finish improving." – *Annette Gohlke*

NP: *Are there any problem areas you can identify in benchmarking?*

AG: I think there will always be both real and perceived problem areas associated with change and learning new processes, especially now. Librarians are absolutely overloaded with change and working under a time crunch. They are constantly challenged to increase their knowledge and experience bank. Where in the busy workday is a librarian supposed fit a benchmarking study—especially since it can take a considerable time commitment? Somewhere between new library services, more demanding customers, implementing new automation tools or coping with the burgeoning Internet? Yet it is the "crises mode" that demands new solutions—and many proactive librarians have been finding those solutions for years. They "borrowed" creative solutions from colleagues "on the fly" rather than using the more formal "benchmarking process." Besides time, benchmarking usually requires a commitment of money from within the library budget or in addition to it. Funds may be used for personnel to help with the study, communications with and travel to visit selected partners.

Tunnel vision (TV) is often the most tenacious obstacle to overcome. People with TV frequently believe that they don't need to "improve." They can also be identified by their frequent answer, "Because I've always done it this way," when asked why they do a task the way they do it. Supervisors of TV personnel will need some charm and charisma, lots of patience and persistence, boundless energy and encouragement if they are to achieve benchmarking success.

NP: *If a librarian is just starting out the process of benchmarking, where would you tell them to start?*

AG: Find out what benchmarking is all about and then determine what goes into quality or how quality is defined. Select a work process that you know needs improving—identified from either your crystal ball, intuition or from lots of complaints. You want to select a work process that can be studied in a reasonable amount of time. Benchmarking is a process that should be completed in about four to six months. You have to know where your resources to benchmark are coming from and what you want to accomplish—your purpose. When you have all of that in focus, then you are ready to conduct and implement a successful benchmarking study.

NP: *How often would you say benchmarking needs to be done?*

AG: It is a continuous process, it's like total quality management—you never finish improving. Let's say you finish your study in six months, then you need to implement the improvement in three to six more months. When you are finished, you may look for another process to improve, but you will still be looking at the one you just completed to make sure that is still a "best practice" and that you don't slip back into old habits. There's always room for improvement.

Which Way Do You Want to Serve Your Customers?

by Dinesh K. Gupta and Ashok Jambhekar

Dinesh Gupta is the assistant professor and head of the Department of Library and Information Sciences at Kota Open University in Kota, India.

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The Importance of Customer Service

LIBRARY SERVICE IS ESSENTIALLY A SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY OF USERS.

But some librarians could be accused of poor services to customers. The development of customer-oriented services skills not only allows the library to put forward the services offered as effectively as possible, but also test its services and facilities against users' needs and wants. Thus, the library needs to re-examine the ways in which it serves its users. A good service is of little benefit to the community if it is not made available in the most effective way. Part of this strategy will involve the careful presentation and packaging of services and facilities offered to give both the best individual service, and at the same time, a clear and effective message about the total library services to customers.

Service-Mindedness: At the Heart of the Profession

Libraries have always been services, in the sense that they offer a collection for consultation by a body of people, with a catalog as a key to the collection. Librarians have also generally been people who have wished to be of service to the community, though in a less direct way than, say, social workers.

But "service" has come to connote a more positive kind of activity than consultation, which requires little direct effort on the part of the library. Even catalogs can be passive-basic and author-designed with users in mind, accessible by a variety of elements, capable of generating selective printouts, while also being interactive. Thus, the service is the access to books and information and the advice and assistance that staff provides to users. Whatever the mechanism may be for the delivery of services to users, "we must see that it is delivered on time, as per the specifications of the users, in the quantity they required—no more, no less—in the packaging they preferred, at the place they need it, in a courteous, helpful and proper manner. This is all important (believe it or not), and serves as the essentials behind 'service mindedness.' Developing a 'customer service culture' by embracing all these objectives, is the hallmark of any organization which is prepared to invest the effort it takes to be successful" (Gupta and Jambhekar, 2001).

> "A good service is of little benefit to the community if it is not made available in the most effective way."

All libraries might claim to be service-oriented, but, in fact, are they service-oriented? Is their approach to serving customers proper? How good are their services? And, to what extent do they serve their customers? These are the questions every LIS manager needs to respond to while making decisions about the customer service in his/her library. A library's organizational success may depend on these responses.

Customer Services: A Professional's Outlook

Many authors have commented about the importance of customer service in library and information services. There are very pragmatic reasons, including "quality" and "accountability," that make it necessary for looking at information services in terms of customer service. High standards of customer service create higher visibility for the information service unit. It is this enhanced visibility that will lead to better positioning in the organization. If the services are good, the unit will also be perceived as good. As managers of various departments come to recognize how good the information unit can be in providing the products and services they use for their work, they will encourage others to avail to the services of the unit, and word will spread throughout the organization. Incorporating high standards of customer service into information services has to do with the conduct of those who are successfully serving the unit. It goes without saying that satisfied users come back for more services, and as these numbers grow (satisfied customers who are also committed to success for the information unit itself), a group of them may evolve into an unofficial support group for the information unit. They become, without knowing it, *advocates* or political sponsors, for the information service unit. As questions of vitality, expertise and/or authority of the specialized library or information unit come up, these people are available, ready and willing to emphasize the value of the information unit to the organization or community. There are four essential motivating factors that drive us to excel in the delivery of information services and products, and the information service managers who succeed recognize the value of these in the work he/she does (St. Clair; 1993):

1. *The* **VALUE** *of the service is determined by our users.* If we cannot provide them with what they need for their success, something is wrong.

2. *We want* **"REPEAT BUSINESS"**—*to bring customers "back for more."* The more customers use the libraries services, the larger the role will become for your organization.

3. *Being* **SERVICE-ORIENTED** *should be at the core of our profession.* If we do not like being responsible for the provision of information services of the highest quality, perhaps we are in wrong business.

4. *The* **WORK** *of the information service unit supports the overall mission of the organization, which provides its support.* When that primary role becomes muddled or weakened, it is time for a re-evaluation of what we do.

Customer Service in LIS: A Closer Look at Users

Customer service is a critical and inseparable part of doing business in libraries, which we provide through user services, circulation services, readers' advisory services and reference services. However, quality service goes beyond these. Most of these play a part in customer service, but fall short of the 'whole.' Customer service requires entirely interlocking each network which contributes to the well-being of the organization and then meeting the mission and the service vision. More closely, the services of the library can be divided into two: the "front office" and the "back office."

Front office procedures are those experienced by the customers. In some instances, they represent a very small portion of the total library and information strategy. For instance, in a public library the extent of personal contact between the customer and the library employee is limited to use of reading room facilities, giving replies to some queries, pointing out the location of the information sources, etc. In libraries the customer is exposed to physical facilities and to numerous personnel—ranging from circulation clerk to stacking area staff and the reference assistance to the media adviser. Due to the importance of the relationship between the service provider and consumer, quality of customer service is increasingly being viewed as a key to the total service strategy. Recognizing the importance of such interactions for customer satisfaction, it can be said, "Customer service is the task... that involves interactions with customers in person, by telecommunications or by mail. It is designed, performed and communicated with two goals in mind—operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Essentially it embraces all personnel whose jobs bring them into contact with customers on a routine, as well as on an exceptional basis. Such personnel become part of the overall product, even though their jobs may have been defined in strictly operational terms. Hence the need to balance operational efficiency against customer satisfaction (Lovelock, 1991)."

Customer service is about more than just asking your customers what they need or sending out surveys to determine customer satisfaction. Customer service is about stretching to give more than the customer expects. It's about providing value-added service without being asked. It's about putting yourself in the place of that customer and thinking like a customer! Each of us should know what our customers expect before they know it. If you can, go a long way toward truly satisfying their needs. If you can make satisfaction a regular habit, you can make your customers allies in the battle of budgets, respect or any other needs you might have (Bender, 1999).

Attributes of Customer Service

The delivery of service must be timely, accurate and with concern and courtesy. One may ask why these elements are important. The answer is: all services are intangible and are a function of perception. As such they depend on interpretations. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, service by definition is perishable—if left unattended, it can backfire on the organization. This relates directly to the acronym "COMFORT," which signifies the importance of service (Caring, Observant, Mindful, Friendly, Obliging, Responsible and Tactful). These characteristics are the most basic attributes of customer service; without them, there can be no true service of any kind (Stamatatis, 1997).

- "Caring" shows that, indeed, you are very much interested in what the customer has to say. You may spend time with the customer to find out his/her real needs, wants, expectations, etc.

- You must be "observant." In most cases when dealing with service-related items, observations may contribute to satisfying the customer more than direct communication. Pay attention to body language and mannerisms. If necessary, read between the lines. Always try to be one step ahead of the customer. Anticipate his/her action. Actively listen to what the customer is communicating, as well as—and perhaps more importantly—what he/she is not communicating.

- You must be "mindful." Remember that you and your organization exist to satisfy the customer. Without the customer's need, you do not have a job nor does the organization have a service to provide. The customer has a choice, and as such, if you or your organization does not recognize the urgency, the sensitivity, the uniqueness, the expectations and the influence that the customer has, you will not be successful in satisfying the customer.

- You must be "friendly." Friendliness does not mean being a pest. Offer guidance and information, and let the customer know you are there for help. If you have to, provide feedback to help the customer make his/her decision. If you do provide feedback, be truthful.

- You must be "obliging." Patience is the keyword when a customer may be making up his/her mind while talking with you. You are serving as the guinea pig for the customer's decision. As such, accommodating the person may make the difference between a satisfied and dissatisfied customer. It may make the difference between a sale and a walkout. When obliging the customer, do not hesitate to educate the customer as well.

- You must be "responsible." You are the expert. The customer is looking to you to provide the appropriate information in a clear, concise and easy-to-understand manner. However, the strategy may backfire. What you are trying to accomplish is the development of a relationship where your expertise can indeed help the customer.

- You must be "tactful." In any service organization and in any service delivery, there are going to be problems between you and the customer. Do not panic. Tactfulness is the process through which the conflict may be resolved. Your focus is to satisfy the customer, and as such you should try to identify the problem, analyze it and then resolve it in the most expedient way. Being tactful does not mean that you have to give in to the customer all the time. Act in a professional manner, be composed and communicate to the customer in a way that is not threatening or demeaning. Be willing to listen and exchange information with the intention of resolving the conflict. Being tactful means presenting the facts and information in a nice manner. It means listening patiently. It means thinking before speaking. It means listening to customers without interrupting. Remember nature also has the same message (i.e., there are two ears and one mouth).

"Customer service is a critical and inseparable part of doing business in libraries..."

Categories of Customer Service

There are basically five categories of customer service (Khera, 1997). One may need to ask, "Into what category does our organization fall?" The categories are:

- **Miserable Customer Service:** The employee actually goes out of his way to irritate the customer and makes the buying experience pathetically unforgettable.

- **Careless and Unconcerned Customer Service:** In this scenario, the employee is indifferent to the customer's needs. He/she could not care either way whether the customer buys or not. Here the attitude resonates, 'take it or leave it.'

- **Anticipated Customer Service:** Where the customer gets what is expected—no more, no less. Every customer has some expectation of product/service, courtesy and price when they go to make a purchase. Based on the treatment a customer receives, the organization gets labeled. The question is, "Is it good to get labeled?" It is if the label is good.

- **Competent Customer Service:** In order to understand what is competent customer service, we must understand that the employee should have skills and a desire to serve customers. It is not uncommon to see many organizations train their staff in customer service skills, such as greeting customers, shaking hands, saying "please" and "thank you," smiling and so on. These courtesies are very important. But unless we have a true desire to serve the customer, how long can a person keep a fake smile on his face? Besides, people can see through a facade. If a smile is not sincere, it is irritating. There has to be substance over form, not form over substance.

- **Exceptional Customer Service:** It is an organization's responsibility. It is a mutually profitable relationship. It is organizational commitment to do whatever it takes to make the buying experience delightful for the customer by providing added value products or services. It is the delightful experience that brings the customer back. Any experience that is enjoyable will be one customers want to repeat. It is the added value that breeds loyalty. Exceptional customer service includes competence and courtesy. When a customer makes a purchase, he/she has actually purchased the right to be treated with courtesy and to be provided with competent service. In order to provide exceptional customer service we must recognize customers' needs and expectations. There is a difference between customer service and customer satisfaction. Customer service is from the provider's point of view, whereas satisfaction is from the customer's point of view.

The selection of service will have a vital impact on the overall performance of employees, management and the organization as a whole.

Some Questions About the Customer Service in Your Library

Users are described variously, such as:

- Users are those for whom information systems are created.
- A user is the king around whom all the activities of the library revolve.
- L&I Centers exist to meet the needs of all its users.
- A user is the focal point of all information activities.
- L&I Centers are worthless without users.

The above descriptions are very broad-based and imply that every L&I Center must develop infrastructure, resources and services to fulfil information needs of every individual user or user group. The purpose of an L&I Center is defined by the needs of users, and the success of that service is determined by satisfaction or delight of users (Gupta, 1996). The "User is the King" attitude also recognizes the fact that it is important to keep in mind a user's lifetime value to the organization, rather than to look at the value of one transaction. However, even libraries do not consider giving users service on a continual basis—they see every visit by a user in a transactional manner. To assess the service approach of a library, the following are key questions that every LIS manager needs to ask their staff:

- How do you rate the quality of service you offer?
- Are customers happy with the level of service you provide?
- Do you find the service component of the library difficult to manage?
- What are your customer's views about the service of the library?
- Are you aware of the poor or good services you provide to customers? What attempts have you made to improve or benchmark the service?
- Is your service user-friendly? Is it convenient to the customers?
- Do customers have clear expectations from your library? Do you know what they are?
- Do you have a promise for your customers? How do you plan to meet it?
- Does every function in the library see itself as contributing to customer satisfaction?
- Is the concept of internal customer satisfaction working in your library? Is it measured?

> "The delivery of service must be timely, accurate and with concern and courtesy."

The response from your library to these questions largely enunciates the approach used to serve your customers. There could be a number of areas in which there is steeper development in your library, because more and more information is available on the Internet and online services. But, relatively, this is a more leisurely, lagging and limping improvement when it comes to services. Goodson (1997) has expressed his worries over such a move. To him, "Librarians are in great danger of being cut out of the loop completely—not because they think they no longer need us. Why not? We have tried for years to convince them that this is true, that they can do it all themselves—and with many resources available as close as their home computers, I can assure you that these are what they will use—not because they are the best materials for their needs, but simply because it's convenient. The unique thing about librarians is that we are trained not only to find information and organize it, but also to evaluate its quality. But we have consistently abdicated these responsibilities in misguiding attempts to make libraries more and more self-service. Again, as the availability and access to information technology escalates, librarians have less and less time left to show people what we really can do for them. We are well on our way to extinction if we don't start changing the way we do things and fast."

The Need For a Fresh Look

Tomorrow's new services and ideas will come from active investigation about themselves, their fields, their libraries, and most importantly, the users they serve. Unfortunately, the traditional and extensive surveys many libraries employ reveal nothing about the individual user's needs or the services that may be offered. Most of the time individual users remain invisible. Is it the right way to understand the user and their needs? Or could there be any alternative to such a system, which helps us to properly recognize these needs in order to meet them exceedingly? A strategic focus on customer service can act as an effective tool in helping libraries to accomplish their mission of serving users in an improved way. All products for which every library strives to provide access must be served with a customer "service" attitude, to offer a total value proposition to every individual customer. We must start providing good services to customers, because *customers do not know what good service is—until they do not get it. And good service adds value to library resources.*

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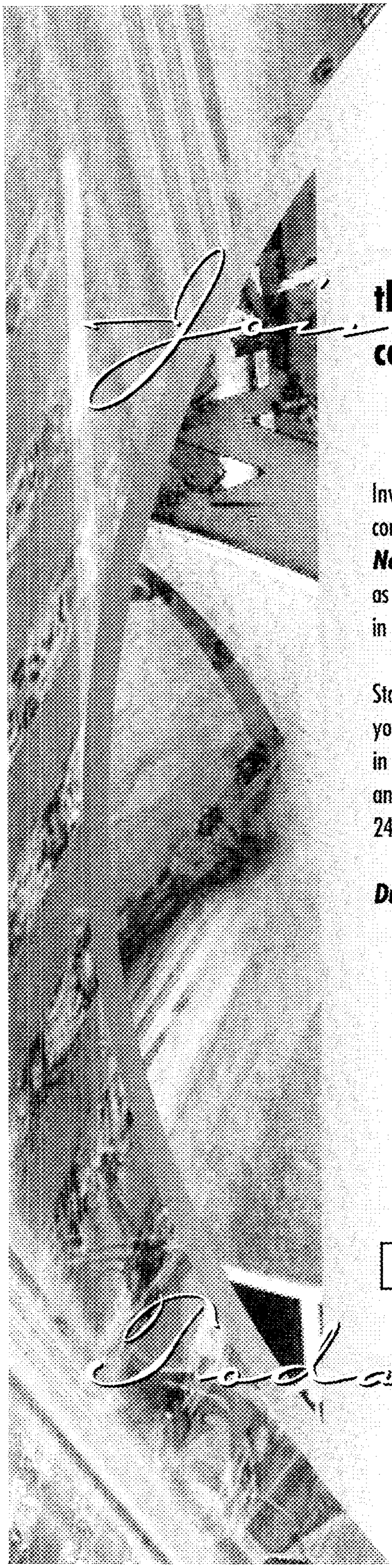

A Testimony to the Non-Stereotypical Librarian

by Nikki Poling

Nikki Poling is the assistant editor of Information Outlook.

Meet Sandra Kitt

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT SLA MEMBERS DO IN THEIR SPARE TIME?

This month Assistant Editor Nikki Poling picked the mind of one librarian and SLA member, Sandra Kitt, to find out what our members are doing in their free time.

Sandra Kitt had always imagined she'd grow up to illustrate children's books, but she never suspected she would be writing fiction for adults one day.

Born and raised the eldest of four children in New York City, Kitt followed her dream of illustrating to City University, where she obtained her bachelor's in fine arts. (Eventually, she did do some illustrating, working on cards for UNICEF and designing two books with the late scientist Dr. Isaac Asimov.)

Kitt worked part-time during undergrad at the American Museum of Natural History's astronomy library, and was employed after graduation at a small advertising agency. After a few years, she decided to return to City University to pursue her master's degree and halfway through her program the museum director offered Kitt a position as head librarian at the astronomy library. Although she didn't have much knowledge of astronomy, Kitt did know how to manage the collection, so she accepted the position as a second career to her artwork.

"I enjoyed the fact that people came to me for help. And I found that I enjoyed helping them, that's the most simplistic level of it," Kitt said. "That is how it began, just functioning in the library to help people."

Kitt found the research aspect of the library profession fascinating. It challenged her and she welcomed the invitation. She considered herself an "information detective."

"The challenge was always, 'Can I find the answer to this question?' I became very determined that I could always have an answer," Kitt said.

With the feeling that she needed to learn more, Kitt enrolled in classes at the Hayden Planetarium with the staff astronomers. She attended lectures given by guest speakers and wound up meeting the likes of Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, John Wilford Noble and many of the astronauts from the Apollo moon missions.

"As I took on more responsibility, I also became much more innovative in developing programs, services and ideas that would better help me to find information for the public—and better help them focus their attention," Kitt said.

But Kitt's plate was still not full. In 1981, an idea popped into her head and she sat down to write.

"I didn't tell anyone what I was doing, because I didn't know what I was doing. For the most part, I was entertaining myself. I just had this neat idea," Kitt said. "I wanted to explore. So I would go home in the evenings and just work on it. But six weeks later, I had a 500-page manuscript."

Since Kitt had never considered writing before, she really had no expectations of getting published. But her ideas kept coming and after spending a year and a half churning her thoughts on to paper, she had produced *three* manuscripts.

"I had all these ideas that were coming really fast, and I said, 'Well, you know, maybe some of this is really legitimate, maybe it's publishable.' "

Ironically, the year that she finished her third manuscript, Kitt saw an article in the *New York Times* about a woman named Vivian Stephens who was starting a new line of books in New York for Harlequin Enterprise, the world's largest and oldest publisher of romance novels based in Canada. Kitt called Stephens, introduced herself and arranged a meeting.

"I knew nothing about publishing, so she gave me a crash course and explained what she was looking for," Kitt said. "At the end of meeting she said, 'Why don't you send me two of your three books and let me take a look at them.' So I did and she bought both of them. I sold two books ('Rites of Spring' and 'Adam and Eva') in a matter of a week—without the benefit of an agent."

When Kitt sold "Adam and Eva," she became the first ever African American to publish with Harlequin, while also going on to design a few books for them. But she became frustrated when publishers began branding her a romance writer.

"When I began writing, if you were a female writing stories with a romance, you were a romance writer. There really weren't many options," Kitt said.

As her writing career was getting off the ground, Kitt remained active as an artist and was still working in the library. By the time she sold her third manuscript ("All Good Things") to DoubleDay in 1983, she was "off and running."

"I found that I was doing a number of firsts at the time (especially in women's fiction)," Kitt explains. "I was one of the first writers who wrote from the female and male point of view. And I also diversified the population in my books. Very few books at the time were ethnically diverse.

By now, she was becoming antsy—creatively speaking. In 1995 she produced a book that Harlequin passed on, giving her the opportunity to go to a bigger house, Penguin Putnam. The book, *The Color of Love,* would end up being Kitt's most popular work. It is currently in its 9th printing and has been optioned twice for film (once with HBO and the second time with a production company in L.A.).

"*The Color of Love* was my break out book from romance to more mainstream-type books. Twenty-five books later, it is still the one readers consistently tell me is their favorite book. I was very pleased with the way it turned out."

Kitt found that as she continued writing, her stories grew much larger and she began doing intense research. "Interestingly enough," Kitt said, "This harkens back to being a librarian."

She went from helping other people, to having to do her own research for specific projects. "I just LOVE the research, the process of exploring a subject and finding information," Kitt said. "One of my favorite techniques of research is interviewing people, interviewing experts in their field."

By being "totally involved and immersed" in her subjects, this research technique allows Kitt to "give the voice of authenticity" to her characters. Through interviews with NYC fire Marshals and police officers, FBI agents, Navy Seals, divers, weathermen, doctors, journalists and one young woman inflicted with sickle cell anemia, Kitt not only creates the complete character, but as she says, "I am also learning an awful lot."

Her latest book, *She's the One,* was released just one month before the September 11th terrorist attacks. The story featured a library director as the heroine and a New York firefighter as the hero. Also touching on her identity as a librarian, Kitt has produced a piece featuring an antiquarian book restorer as the heroine. But now she is trying to find a way to incorporate her work at the astronomy/astrophysics library into a story. One individual suggested a murder mystery.

Kitt laughs, "And we'll call it 'Murder in the Stars' or something."

In addition to her writing career and work at the library, Kitt teaches a publishing/creative writing course at a New Jersey college. She insists, "Every person has at least one good story in them, because we all come from interesting and unique family backgrounds and situations.

For those who have a hidden interest in writing, Kitt suggests keeping a journal and writing every day. "This gets you into the habit of paying attention to your feelings, emotions and insights on things. You become a much better observer of the world around you, because that is what a writer is—someone who observes life and people."

Kitt derives many of her story ideas from newspapers, magazines or stories she may see on the news or in movies. She also asks a lot of 'what-if' questions to get her started.

"I also cover social issues," said Kitt. "I have written about surrogate motherhood, abandoned children, race relations, race identity, interracial/class differences and relationships. I try to structure the story so anyone reading it will get something out of it."

After spending more than 20 years at the American Museum of Natural History, Kitt doesn't plan to give up any of her careers. She continues as a director of library staff for the museum, still works in the astronomy/astrophysics department and writes in her spare time. The thought of becoming a full-time writer has crossed her mind, but Kitt has three reasons for not leaving her day job.

"I really like being a librarian, I really love what I do," said Kitt. "I have been reluctant to let it go, because it has been such a satisfying career. A lot of very, very good friends have been made through SLA and as a member of the association and being a library professional, I have always loved those contacts. I've always found librarians to be very open, friendly, generous people and that's a society I have always really enjoyed."

The second reason: the unpredictability of the publishing industry. "Just because I am successful this year, doesn't mean I will be next year," Kitt said.

"And the third thing is, I am the kind of person that really needs to be around people. I need to have the connection both intellectually and emotionally," Kitt explains. "Contact is what gives me story ideas. To cut myself off and just write would be a disservice to myself as a writer.

Sandra Kitt will remain a librarian by day, a writer by night and a testimony to the non-stereotypical life librarians do lead.

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copyright corner

Digital Library Projects and Copyright

by Laura Gasaway

Today both academic and special libraries are creating digital libraries and archives. Digital projects generally have two goals: 1) to preserve library material; and 2) to make the materials available to users both near and far.

Whether the library confronts copyright problems in developing these projects depends on the ownership of the copyright, the status of the work and at least somewhat on the distribution of digital copies. Some digital products are for preservation only (the digital version is not made available to users), while the sole purpose of other projects is to provide increased availability. Some digital library projects involve public domain materials in which the institution or organization has a significant interest. Since this material is not protected by copyright, the library is free to make the digitized public domain work available on an intranet or on the Web. Other digital library projects involve digitizing unpublished archival materials such as letters, diaries and manuscripts. Frequently, a library will not have obtained the copyright in the deed of transfer when the artifact was received. While the library or archive may often own the only copy of a work, unless the copyright holder specifically transferred the copyright along with the item, the institution does not have the reproduction and distribution rights.

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act gave libraries the right to make up to three copies of an unpublished work for preservation, security or deposit for research in another library. One of these copies may be digital (17 U.S.C. § 108(b) (2000)) However, a digital copy of a copyrighted, unpublished work made under this section may not be made available to the public outside the premises of the library or archives, and thus may not be distributed via the Web.

At the end of 2002, a huge number of unpublished works will enter the public domain. Works that were in existence on January 1, 1978, and which remain unpublished through the end of 2002, will enter the public domain at the end of December 31, 2002 or life of the author plus 70 years (whichever is greater). Within a few months, there will be no copyright problem with making many of these works available on the Web, because they will have entered the public domain. If the library or archives does not hold the copyright, then before digitizing the work and making it available to the public, the library should seek permission of the copyright holder. The author holds the copyright or if the author is deceased his/her heirs will hold the copyright. If the library or archives has made a significant effort to locate the author or the heirs but has been unable to do so, it could decide to assume the risk of liability and make the digital work available.

There are also older published materials in which libraries and archives have an interest for adding to digital library collections. The work may be out of print but still under copyright. The library must either request permission from the copyright owner to digitize such works or be willing to assume the risk for digitizing the work and making it available to users. A copyright holder is less likely to grant permission for digitizing a work still protected by copyright if it has any interest in either reprinting it or bringing out a new edition of the work, including a digital version. On the other hand, it is often difficult to locate the copyright holder if the publisher of the work has disappeared or gone out of business.

The 1998 Copyright Term Extension Act added a new subsection (h) to section 108 of the Act, which was intended to reduce the effects of the 20-year term extension. It provides that during the last 20 years of a work's term, a library, archives or a nonprofit educational institution may reproduce, distribute, display or perform a work in either facsimile or digital form if certain conditions are met. The library must first determine by reasonable investigation that: (1) a copy of the work cannot be obtained at a reasonable price; and (2) the work is no longer subject to commercial exploitation. This can be determined by contacting the copyright owner, who provides notice that neither of these two conditions exists. The statute contains no restriction on making such work available on the Web. The exemption does not apply to any subsequent uses by users other than the library or archives that makes the investigation. So, each library or archives that wants to digitize such a work must conduct its own investigation.

KEx corner

Evidence-Based Research: Its Role in Developing the DPHT Strategic Plan

by Karen Kreizman Reczek

What is Evidence-Based Research (EBR)?

One thing is certain, this is a topic that goes by many names—evidence-based medicine, evidence-based decision-making, evidence-based practice, etc. In a nutshell, EBR aims to achieve the appropriate balance of sound theory and relevant empirical evidence to make decisions.

The Pharmaceutical and Health Technology Division's (DPHT) Strategic Planning Committee set out to do just that—apply evidence-based research to the development of the division's strategic plan. The division wanted a road map to follow, in order to ensure that we were meeting member needs and providing growth for the future.

"As a profession which has the ability to manage the literature of research, librarianship is uniquely placed to model the principles of evidence-based practice, not only as they apply to other disciplines which we serve, but also as they apply to our own professional practice," Ann Ritchie said in the December 1999 issue of *incite Magazine* (http://www.alia.org.au/incite/1999/12/appraisal.html).

What Did We Do?

The first step in the process was to gather some empirical evidence. We needed to survey our members. The committee examined model surveys/division surveys for ideas, while also reviewing literature on designing effective surveys. The division board provided input on the survey instrument. One member recommended including questions on the division's strengths and weaknesses and the potential opportunities and threats. Once finalized, the survey was mailed to all division members. The goals of the survey were to:

Gather useful information on:
- Who are we professionally
- What we do in SLA
- What we do in our division
- What we want/need out of our division

Understand these demographics to assist us in:
- Targeting our programs
- Determining whether we should co-sponsor programs
- Understanding what topics should be offered in our programming
- Evaluating the services the PHT Division provides
- Planning to meet the specific needs of the membership

While only a small sampling of surveys were returned (91 out of 816—a mere 11 percent), they depict a broad cross-section of the division and seem representative of what we believe to be the demographic characteristics of the division as a whole. The survey results were then tabulated (charts and graphs were created) and comments were compiled. All and all, this was quite an arduous task. The results were then posted on the division Web site.

Now, the real work had to begin. The committee needed to analyze the data and ask the ever-important question, "So what?" After analyzing the data, the committee realized we had more unanswered questions than when we started! We agreed that we needed more "evidence" to support our theories. Our concern was we were lacking a statistically representative number of responses from division members in management positions and in non-pharma companies. We also discovered that many of the responses we received needed further probing, which couldn't be accomplished via a mail survey.

Our next step was to conduct focus group interviews. Each committee member chose five division members (many in senior level management position) to contact directly. Every effort was made to provide a cross-representation of health care industries and geographies. The results were phenomenal! This time we had managed to get at the heart of the issues and receive excellent feedback that would serve as the foundation for developing our strategic plan.

However, we didn't stop there! The committee spent time reviewing SLA's strategic plans as well as the strategic plans available from other divisions and chapters. Once completed, we drafted the plan. The draft plan was then sent to the PHT Board for validation and comment. In June, the plan was presented to the division membership at the Annual Business Meeting in Los Angeles.

Was It Worth the Effort?

You bet! The outcome of this labor-intensive, year-and-a-half process was an evidence-based strategic plan, which clearly addresses division member needs and concerns. As the incoming 2002/2003 DPHT Board assumes office, they will have a well-grounded plan by which to guide their decisions.

Strategic Planning Committee members included: Sean DeNora, Novartis Pharmaceuticals Canada; Bernadette Ewen, Aventis Pasteur (PHT Division Chair); Stephanie Fitch, DeLoitte & Touche; and Karen Kreizman Reczek, MTL-ACTS (Committee Chair).

strategic learning outlook

Learning the Skills Needed to Assess and Benchmark

Written in collaboration with ARL, FLICC and SLA

In today's economic conditions, garnering and brokering information has become a valuable skill. The *true value* of information is undeniable. Understanding and implementing measurement and communication strategies will continue to be critical to the success of information professionals in all organizations. You must be capable of managing information and understanding how to measure its value within your organization.

To help shorten the learning curve, we are pleased to introduce the Library Assessment and Benchmarking Institute (LAB 2002) in Monterey, California, USA, from September 13-17, 2002. The institute, presented in partnership with SLA (Special Libraries Association), Federal Library and Information Center Committee (FLICC) and ARL (Association for Research Libraries), will provide you with practical strategies for measuring and communicating the value of information.

A. Parasuraman, professor and holder of the James W. McLamore Chair in Marketing at the University of Miami, will discuss the application of user-centered models for assessing service quality, such as SERVQUAL, TRI (Technology Readiness Index), and e-SQ (Electronic Service Quality). Grounded in the Gap Theory of Service Quality, the SERVQUAL survey instrument was developed for the for-profit sector in the 1980's by the marketing research group of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry. The TRI is an instrument developed to help companies gain an in-depth understanding of the readiness of their customers to embrace and interact with technology.

The conversation on day two will focus on the ARL LibQUAL+™ project, a large-scale, online user-based assessment of multiple methods of listening to clients. It is the only total market survey tool developed for libraries. Colleen Cook, executive associate dean, Texas A&M University Libraries, and Bruce Thompson, professor & distinguished research scholar, Texas A&M University will provide an overview of the LibQUAL+™ project.

In addition, the institute will also present guidelines for designing and administering complementary or alternative surveys that may be used with samples or selected subsets of clients. For those who want to gather direct input on individual clients' needs, the principles of structuring and conducting focus groups will also be covered.

The institute will cover means and methods for measuring what is being done on your intranet Web site—both the use of public domain Internet resources and the use of the licensed commercial databases that the information center has made available. In the case of "free" Web site activity, it will explain what information you can glean by using monitoring software and how to understand the reports they produce. When it comes to commercial online databases, knowing what data to request from your vendor in order to understand your clients' usage is vital.

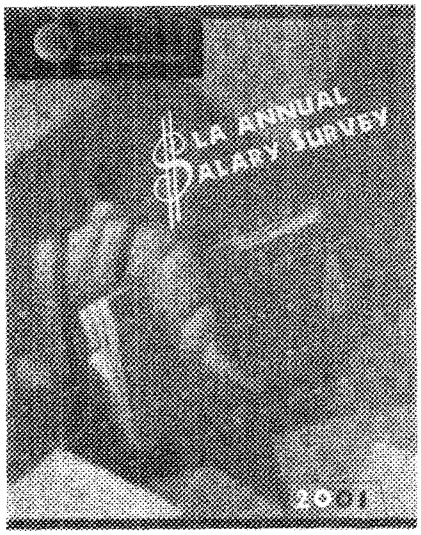
Other techniques to be presented by the institute are "the Balanced Scorecard" and benchmarking. The institute will help you develop a culture of assessment that can lead to better-focused information resource management for your company, agency or department.

In summary, ask yourself if you have the skills needed to assess and benchmark the information that you provide your organization. The simple fact that you're reading this column makes that point mute. You've demonstrated an interest and taken an active role in making learning happen. We hope that you'll consider joining your colleagues for LAB 2002. Remember, SLA's Strategic Learning Team supports you as you work to garner these skills.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Don't miss your chance to participate in the Library Assessment and Benchmarking Institute (LAB 2002) at the Monterey Hyatt Regency in Monterey, California, USA. For more details or pricing information, visit www.sla.org. Of course, you can also contact SLA's Strategic Learning Team at 202-939-3679 or learning@sia.org for details.

- Participate in "New Ways of Listening to Library Users: Tools for Measuring Service Quality" an ARL/SLA workshop with A. Parasuraman and the LibQUAL+™ Team. The session will be conducted on September 27-28, 2002, at the Association of Research Libraries in Washington, D.C. For details, visit http://www.arl.org/libqual/events/listen/index2.html.



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communications outlook

The Telecommuting Trend: Is it For You?

by Anthony Blue

Since the mid- to late '90s (which seems like a decade ago), many organizations implemented telecommuting policies as an added benefit for their employees. With the marvelous advances in technology (Internet, e-mail and fax), putting in a full day's work without leaving the comfort of your own home became a reality, especially for those of us who are not fortunate enough to have a job within walking distance. There are many benefits to working out of your home; however, it may not be right for you. The following is a list of pros and cons to help you decide:

Pro
- You have free reign over your work environment.

Con
- You must be highly motivated and self-disciplined to get going in the morning.

Pro
- There is no daily commute or traffic to deal with. You will save money on transportation and repairs to your car.

Con
- I honestly searched for a disadvantage and could only come up with.... You may need to get out of the house. (But you can always take a walk.)

Pro
- You can work in shorts and a T-shirt.

Con
- The relaxed atmosphere can be very misleading and hinder your production.

Pro
- No one is looking over your shoulder and questioning your every move.

Con
- No one can visualize your work ethic either. This is tricky because it may depend on how you are judged at the office. Perception is reality in some cases.

Pro
- You can write off a small portion of your home office expenses on your taxes.

Con
- Anytime you can save money with Uncle Sam, there is no disadvantage. However, you have to be able to keep good records just in case he calls.

Pro
- If you are married or have children at home, this type of work situation can be especially convenient for you.

Con
- This arrangement can also be a hindrance to your work production if you spend the majority of your time dealing with family issues.

Pro
- You can set your own schedule and work around it.

Con
- Your home is your office, so you have to find a refuge from work.

Pro
- Your production increases because there aren't as many distractions (phones, co-workers, meetings).

Con
- You miss out on projects and brainstorming sessions with your co-workers.

Pro
- You don't have to deal with the strains of office politics.

Con
- You lose the camaraderie with your co-workers because of a lack of face time.

Working from home has advantages and disadvantages. The situation has to be the right one. Start out telecommuting once or twice a week to determine if it's an ideal situation for you. Keep in mind, when you telecommute, you will be subjected to a different type of scrutiny from your co-workers. Is it right for you? Who knows! If you decide to try it out, remember that you should always maintain a presence at the main office. Once in a while do a luncheon with your boss or co-workers to let everyone know how everything is going. Attend non-work related functions in order to maintain some connection with your office even if you are not there. Treat your work area at home as if it you are at the office. Set work and lunch hours and cut out any distractions.

making news

sla news

Inmagic, Inc., Announces Betty Eddison as a 2002 Inductee to SLA Hall of Fame

Inmagic, Inc., has announced Betty Eddison (a co-founder and chair emeritus of Inmagic, Inc.) as a 2002 inductee to the SLA Hall of Fame. Eddison was one of three inducted at SLA's 93rd Annual Conference in Los Angeles. Eddison was honored for a number of lifetime achievements, including her commitment to SLA, her contributions to the information profession and her vision for its future.

Eddison co-founded Inmagic in 1983 and since then has been in leadership roles to provide its customers with the tools and information necessary to fit their needs. Prior to Inmagic, she co-founded Warner-Eddison Associates, Inc., an information management consulting company.

A former chair of SLA's Library Management Division, Eddison holds a bachelor's degree from Vassar College and a master's degree from the Simmons College Graduate School of Library and Information Science.

chapter & division news

Exchange Club Recognizes Cheryl Hansen

On May 17, 2002 the Exchange Club of Naperville (IL) presented its Erv Kendzora Book of Golden Deeds Award to Cheryl Hansen. The award is named after the club's founding father and honors individuals and groups who exemplify volunteerism by continuously donating their time, talent and energy to help those in need.

Hansen has a long history of volunteerism with several Naperville organizations. Several years ago, she began volunteering with the Greater DuPage MYM (Meld Young Moms), a nonprofit organization that provides community-based support for adolescent parents and their families. Hansen is also an active member at Knox Presbyterian Church, where she has taught Sunday school, Prime Time and volunteered as the director of the church's Youth Club. In addition, Hansen volunteers once a year at a homeless shelter and for three years has served as Market Day Chairperson raising funds for Highlands Elementary School in Naperville.

Hansen currently serves as secretary for SLA's Engineering Division. She will become chair of the division in June 2003. Hansen also volunteers on the Awards Committee for the Science-Technology Division.

Craig Named Inaugural Recipient of Marion E. Sparks Award for Professional Development

Cory Craig, chemistry librarian at the UC Davis Physical Sciences and Engineering Library, has been named the inaugural recipient of the Marion E. Sparks Award for Professional Development, established by SLA's Chemistry Division. The award is designed to recognize ambitious new members of SLA and assist them with their career growth. An honorary certificate and check for $1,000 was presented to Craig in June at the division's annual business meeting in Los Angeles.

Rhode Island Chapter Creates Alice Brendel Award

The Rhode Island Chapter of SLA has established an annual award to commemorate the professional dedication and caring spirit of former Chapter Secretary Alice Brendel, who died in 1991. After thoughtful consideration and consultation, the committee selected Christopher Motta for the first place award and Dan Memmolo for the second place award. Motta and Memmolo were nominated for their excellent work by Tony Stankus, a professor at the URI GLIS school.

Motta received a $250 check and a complimentary student membership for this year. He currently works at MetLife Auto & Home as a subrogation specialist.

Memmolo received a complimentary student membership for this year. He currently works in the computer field.

industry news

Volunteer Librarians Head to Honduras and South Africa

The World Library Partnership (WLP), a nonprofit organization dedicated to building global understanding by promoting literacy, learning and access to information, will be hosting two Inform the World (ITW) projects this summer in Honduras (June 9 – July 9) and South Africa (July 15 – August 15). The Inform the World programs will train and place professional librarians from around the world in order to conduct practical service projects

making news

determined by the needs of their South African and Honduran host libraries. Previous ITW volunteers have trained librarians in basic skills such as how to inventory, weed, repair and catalog books. They also used their knowledge and creativity to help librarians reach out to and meet the needs of their communities. Volunteers have painted murals, taught workshops, made display boards, produced publicity flyers and pamphlets, and helped clean, brighten and re-organize libraries. They have worked on projects ranging from creating a bookmobile to training students to work in their own libraries.

WLP believes that libraries empower individuals and enrich communities and they advocate for sustainable, community-based libraries in developing areas of the world.

Libraries Building Communities

In Rochester, New York, 450 libraries in the five-county area (Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Wayne and Wyoming) are flexing their altruistic muscles and collaborating on a project called Bibliobuild.

Bibliobuild is the first-ever Habitat for Humanity house in the United States to be funded and constructed by library employees, friends and supporters. The project, affiliated with the Flower City Habitat for Humanity program, will result in a new reader-friendly home for a deserving family, complete with bookshelves, books, a computer and library cards for all family members.

The funding phase of Bibliobuild began in November 2001 and continued through the spring of 2002, with the goal of raising $56,000 for construction costs. Construction began in the spring and a completion date is set for October 2002. In the tradition of Habitat for Humanity, the home will be sold at no profit/no interest to a family in the Rochester area. The family will provide 500 hours of "sweat equity" on the project, building their own home or that of another family's.

For more information on the Bibliobuild project, visit www.bibliobuild.org.

Longtime SLA Fellow and Member James Matarazzo to Retire

Longtime SLA Fellow and member Dr. James Matarazzo, dean of Simmons College GSLIS, will retire August 31, 2002. Matarazzo has served as both dean (for the past eight years), assistant dean (for the preceding 14 years) and has been a member of the Simmons faculty for 33 years.

In 1968, there were six faculty members and just two support staff to serve fewer than 300 students enrolled in the GLIS program at Simmons College. Today there are 17 faculty, 10 staff and enrollment has doubled. A new site for the GLIS program is currently under construction at Simmons, including state-of-the-art facilities, technology laboratories and faculty offices.

Matarazzo will continue teaching courses at Simmons. His primary research interest lies in the genesis, success rate and decline of corporate libraries.

Art Taylor Retires

Art Taylor recently retired from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, where he had worked since 1988. Taylor was in charge of the Corps' technical library from 1988 to 1990, and again from 1997 to 2001. During the interim, Taylor was associated with the St. Louis Cooperative Administrative Support Unit (CASU), a government-wide program that encouraged agencies to share the labor and expenses of similar administrative services.

Taylor has been a member of SLA since 1984, serving in various capacities, most notably as president for the 1994-95 term. His committee assignments have included publicity chair, government relations chair, program committee and local chapter communications.

in memoriam

SLA Member Margaret Mary Missar Passes Away

Margaret Mary Missar, a member of SLA since 1984, died of congestive heart failure on April 18, 2002.

In 1998 Missar and her husband, Charles, founded Missar Associates, a research library and consulting firm in Washington, D.C. From 1979 to 1989 Missar worked as a research contractor with Gale Research Company. Missar also did work with Omnigraphics, Inc., of Detroit from 1989 until her retirement in 1999.

Missar was a member of the SLA DC Chapter since 1984, as well as the News and Social Science Divisions. She worked on the Publisher Relations Committee from 1992-94 and also served on the Retired Members Caucus from 1999-2001. Missar leaves behind her husband of 40 years, two sons and three grandchildren.

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coming events

July 2002

Society of Indexers
Conference 2002
July 16-18
Cheltenham, UK
www.socind.demon.co.uk

American Association of Law Libraries
Annual Meeting
July 20-24
Orlando, FL, USA
www.aallnet.org/

August 2002

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)
General Conference and Council
August 18-24
Glasgow, Scotland
www.ifla.org

The Society of American Archivists
2002 Annual Meeting
August 19-25
Birmingham, AL, USA
www.archivists.org/conference/index.html

September 2002

Library Assessment and Benchmarking Institute (LAB 2002)
September 13-17
Monterey, CA, USA

2nd South Atlantic Regional Conference
September 22-24
Asheville, NC, USA
www.sla.org/calendar

WebSearch University
September 23-24
Arlington, VA, USA
www.websearchu.com/scheduledc.html

SLA's Virtual Seminar
September 25
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
www.sla.org/content/Events/distance/virtsem2002/index.cfm

New Ways of Listening to Library Users: Tools for Measuring Service Quality
ARL/SLA Workshop
September 27-28
Washington, D.C., USA
www.arl.org/libqual/events/listen/index2.html

October 2002

WebSearch University
October 22-23
Chicago, IL, USA
www.websearchu.com/schedulech.html

KM World 2002
October 29-31
Santa Clara, CA, USA
www.infotoday.com

SLA's Virtual Seminar
October 30
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
www.sla.org/content/Events/distance/virtsem2002/index.cfm

November 2002

American Society For Information Science & Technology (ASIST)
November 18-21
Philadelphia, PA, USA
www.asis.org

WebSearch University
November 19-20
Dallas, TX, USA
www.websearchu.com/scheduledal.html

December 2002

SLA's Virtual Seminar
December 4
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
www.sla.org/content/Events/distance/virtsem2002/index.cfm

If you have any events you would like added to this page, e-mail us at magazine@sla.org

SLA-Hosted Conferences
* *Conference at which SLA will be exhibiting*